

February Heart Month: Week 4

Heart Attack Warning Signs

The classic television or movie heart attack depicted with sudden chest gripping and a look of intense pain is what often comes to mind when thinking of what a heart attack looks like.

But knowing it's a heart attack isn't always so clear. Most heart attacks start slowly with mild pain or discomfort, and people often wait too long before getting help because they aren't sure what's wrong. Here are common heart attack signs from the *American Heart Association*:

- **Chest discomfort** in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body** such as one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Women sometimes experience the more subtle symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain, and attribute them to acid reflux or the flu.

It's important to seek help immediately by calling 911 if you believe you are experiencing a heart attack.

This is week four of a month-long Heart Month series from the Health and Human Services Department.